

The Signs of the Times, vol. 56

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William Warren Prescott

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1929

December 3, 1929

The Story of Our Bible

WWP

W. W. Prescott

***The first of a series of splendid contributions on this important theme by
William W. Prescott***

[Signs of the Times, December 3, 1929, The Story of Our Bible, Part 1, pp. 4, 5]

DO YOU KNOW—

Whether or not we have the original authors' copies of the various books of the Bible?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.1*

How long the Bible was in process of being written?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.2*

How many men, under inspiration of the Spirit of God, contributed the sixty-six books of the Scriptures?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.3*

In what three languages the Bible was written?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.4*

The story of its translation into the English language?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.5*

What the latest and best manuscripts of the Bible are?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.6*

What kind of "errors," and how many, the copyists have made in transcribing the numerous copies of the Scriptures?*SITI December*

3, 1929, page 4.7

What the difference is between the “Authorized” Version and the “Revised” Version?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.8*

What the Vulgate and the Septuagint are? The connection of Wycliffe, Luther, Coverdale, and Tyndale with the history of Bible translations?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.9*

Whether the Bible as we now have it is reliable, or whether many vital errors have crept in since it was first written?*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.10*

These and scores of other equally as interesting and important questions will be answered in this series of articles by Prof. William W. Prescott. At the request of the editors, Mr. Prescott has been spending many months in research in this field; and every statement made in his articles will be authoritative and amply substantiated from the best sources available. We bespeak a wide reading of his contributions on a theme so vital to Bible students.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.11*

-Editors.

GOD is; God has spoken: God has used human language with which to convey to us His eternal purpose of grace; the Bible is the living word of God, the organism in which the divine will for our salvation finds its expression, the Book of books, unique in its origin, in its formation, and in its transmission to us.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.12*

It is not my purpose in this series to consider the inspiration of the Scriptures nor the formation of the canon, but to present some facts concerning the original texts, and to cover in a general way the story of how the Bible has come down to us through the centuries until we have it in the latest English translations. It is a story of great interest and of supreme importance to every devout reader of the oracles of God.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.13*

I shall begin with a brief review of some simple facts more or less well known to the average reader. Certain names stand out

prominently in our thought of the authorship of the Bible on the human side-Moses, Ezra, David, Isaiah, Paul, and John occur to us at once among the many contributors to this volume, extending over a period of sixteen or seventeen hundred years yet preserving in a remarkable way the unity of the revelation of the gospel of the kingdom. In what language or languages did these and other men write? Have any of the original documents been preserved until our time? In what historical line of descent have these writings come down to us so that we can read them in our own tongue? When we read the English Bible, can we be sure that it brings to us the thoughts of God as they were imparted to writers of the original documents? These are questions worthy of serious consideration on the part of every earnest inquirer after the way of life.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.14*

HEBREW, ARAMAIC, AND GREEK

That portion of the Bible which we designate as the Old Testament was all written in Hebrew, with the exception of *Daniel 2:4 to 7:28; Ezra 4:8 to 6:18, 7:12-26, and Jeremiah 10:11*, which were written in Biblical Aramaic, "a kind of modified Hebrew, employed in part by the Jews in the centuries immediately preceding, and during the Christian era." The New Testament was written in the colloquial Greek of the first century *Anno Domini*. Of course this was fourteen centuries before the invention of printing from type, and a long, long time before the manufacture of modern paper; and all these manuscripts and copies of them were written by hand upon papyrus and skins and vellum. All these original manuscripts have perished, and we are now dependent upon copies and translations, ancient and modern. Of these, however, there are a large number, especially of those containing a whole or a part of the New Testament. "The whole number of different Hebrew MSS. collated by Kennicott and De Rossi, the most laborious students in this department (1753-1783), was 1,346." The number of New Testament manuscripts, large and small, runs into the thousands.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.15*

The existing manuscripts of the Old Testament are of comparatively recent origin, nearly all of them dating from the eleventh century, but "a codex of the date A. D. 916 has been found among the

Karaites of the Crimea, together with an incomplete roll of the law, reaching back to 843.” This statement need not startle anyone, as the rules relating to copying these documents were so rigid that there are but comparatively few variants in the different manuscripts which have been preserved. The present Hebrew text was established very early in the Christian era, if not in the time of Christ, by those who had the greatest possible reverence for their sacred books. “The text they have given us is formed with the most anxious regard for the smallest particulars. The peculiarities of the different writers, books, and times; archaisms, idioms, local shades of dialect, even special modes of writing, are preserved with wonderful fidelity.” *SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.16*

THE SEPTUAGINT VERSION

The number of the Jews who either voluntarily migrated or were transported to the west increased to such an extent, and their adoption of the Greek language was so general, that there arose a demand for a translation of the Hebrew manuscripts into their adopted tongue. This work was begun in the early part of the third century before Christ, and was completed soon after the middle of the second century. The title “LXX,” or Septuagint, was given to this translation, possibly because it was understood that seventy scholars were employed in making it, more probably because “when issued, the translation met with approval, and received the sanction of the Jewish Sanhedrin.” The manuscripts were distributed among the translators, with the natural result that there was a lack of uniformity in the product. The best work was done on the Pentateuch, which was first rendered into Greek. Considerable freedom was exercised in translating the writings of Jeremiah, and “the book of Daniel is the worst of all.” The LXX rendering of this book was later replaced by the version of Theodotion, which has held its place until the present time. *SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.17*

About thirty uncial (large letter) manuscripts of the Septuagint translation have been preserved for us, and over three hundred of the cursives (small letter). “The first printed copy of the Septuagint was embodied in the Complutensian Polyglot, issued under the supervision of Cardinal Ximenes in 1514-1517. The Aldus edition,

based on manuscripts in Venice, appeared in 1518. But the great edition of the Septuagint in those centuries was that published under the patronage of Pope Sixtus in 1587.... The greatest work of all was that issued at Oxford by Holmes and Parsons, 1798-1827. This gives us the Roman edition of 1587, with variant readings of about three hundred twenty-five manuscripts. Tischendorf published a revision of the Roman texts with variants from S, A, and C. Swete published a three-volume edition of the Septuagint (1887-1894), according to the best extant manuscripts, with all the variants of three or four of the next best manuscripts....*SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.18*

“The whole purpose of scholars is (1) to determine as near as may be, by a study of all the best manuscripts, the text of the Septuagint as it was originally translated from the Hebrew; (2) to determine, by the use of that best text of the Septuagint the text of the Hebrew Old Testament from which the Septuagint translation was made; (3) to determine, by a comparison of this text with the Masoretic text, as nearly as may be, the original form of the Hebrew books of the Old Testament. Such determinations, even approximately, clear up many serious difficulties, and aid us greatly in translating the original text into good idiomatic English.”-*Ira Maurice Price.SITI December 3, 1929, page 4.19*

PURPOSE OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

I must pause here a moment to consider briefly a question which naturally arises in connection with this study and revision of manuscripts. What effect, if any, does such textual criticism of these documents have upon the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures? This is not the place to discuss any theory of inspiration, and so I shall deal with this matter without regard to any such theory. The differences in the various manuscripts arise from the mistakes of copyists or from intentional changes introduced by editors either directly or through the adoption of marginal notes designed to elucidate the text. Whatever view of inspiration may be entertained, only the most radical extremist would advocate that there would be any miraculous intervention to prevent such changes from being made. The definite purpose of conscientious textual criticism is not to write a new document, but to restore to us

as far as possible the very words written by the authors of the original manuscripts now lost. This involves years of patient labor on the part of the most competent scholars, whose literary attainments qualify them to deal critically with the languages in which the manuscripts were originally written, and also with the languages of the various early versions, such as the Syriac, the Coptic, etc. Such scholars as Robert Dick Wilson in this country, and B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort in England, have devoted the larger part of their lives to this one field of scholarship, and they have made available to us the valuable fruit of their labors.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.1*

HOW MANY ERRORS?

In this connection I think it may be reassuring to any whose fears may have been aroused by unwarranted conclusions drawn from the large number of variations found in the thousands of manuscripts, if I should submit the statements of two men whose recognized scholarship in the Biblical field will inspire confidence in their unqualified utterances.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.2*

“Only about 400 of the 100,000 or 150,000 variations materially affect the sense. Of these, again, not more than fifty are really important for some reason or other; and even of these fifty not one affects an article of faith or precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching. The Textus Receptus of Stephens, Beza, and Elzevir, and of our English version, teach precisely the same Christianity as the uncial text of the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS., the oldest versions, and the Anglo-American revision. Richard Bentley, the ablest and boldest of classical critics of England, affirms that even the worst of MSS. does not pervert or set aside ‘one article of faith or moral precept.’ Dr. Ezra Abbott, who ranks among the first textual critics, and is not hampered by orthodox bias (being a Unitarian), asserts that ‘no Christian doctrine or duty rests on those portions of the text which are affected by differences in the manuscripts; still less is anything *essential* in Christianity touched by the various readings. They do, to be sure, affect the bearing of a few passages on the doctrine of the Trinity; but the truth or falsity of the doctrine by no means depends upon the reading of those

passages.”-“*Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek*,” Philip Schaff, page liv.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.3*

“The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, faithfully handed down from generation to generation throughout the centuries.”-“*Our Bible and the Ancient MSS.*,” F. G. Kenyon, page 11. (Mr. Kenyon is the librarian of the British Museum in the Department of Manuscripts.)*SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.4*

SOME EXAMPLES OF CHANGE

It is quite probable that some one may ask, If the differences discovered are such as do not have a serious effect upon any fundamental Christian doctrine, why expend so much effort to discover and to correct these slight differences? It is fitting that such an inquiry should be made and answered. First, let me say that while each single variant, when considered by itself, may be of no great importance, yet when they are all taken into account the total result may be of considerable moment. It may surprise some to learn that a very slight change in the text of the original document will sometimes make a decided difference in our English translation. I will give one illustration of this. So simple a correction as the change of one letter in the Greek text of *Romans 7:6* makes the difference between the translation, “that being dead wherein we were held,” as found in the Authorized Version, which rendering declares that the law is dead, and the translation, “having died to that wherein we were held,” as found in the Revised Version. This change in the translation not only maintains the continued existence of the law, but also sets forth a most important gospel truth, viz., that we are freed from the condemnation of the law through our union with Christ in His death. For such an improvement as this we are indebted to textual criticism.*SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.5*

Furthermore, the early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were written with large letters, and without any spaces between the words, and without any accents, and without any punctuation. A sentence in English written in that way would look like this: GODISNOWHERE. By one division of these letters it will read, “God is now here,” but a very slight change in dividing will make it read,

“God is nowhere,” an absolute change in the meaning. This illustration will, I hope, enable my readers to understand more clearly the statement that a slight difference in dividing the letters and the change of only one letter of the Greek text will account for the rendering of the last clause of *Revelation 17:8*, in the Revised Version, “was, and is not, and shall come,” instead of “was., and is not, and yet is,” as in the Authorized Version. Some may have found difficulty in understanding how the beast “is not, and yet is,” but textual criticism has relieved this real difficulty. *SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.6*

Many of the other changes made as the result of the textual criticism are of less importance than these two, but even a slight help in the restoration of the original text should be gladly accepted. The real object of textual criticism of the New Testament, as stated by Dr. Philip Schaff, is “to ascertain and restore, as far as possible, the original text as it came from the pens of the apostolic authors. It aims to show not what they ought to have written, but what they actually did write.” As the result of the faithful work done in this field by both English and American scholars we are able to-day to enter more closely into the revelation of the grace of God for our salvation than have the readers of the Holy Scriptures in the past. *SITI December 3, 1929, page 5.7*

(to be continued)

December 10, 1929

Which Bible Version is the Most Accurate?

WWP

W. W. Prescott

SECOND IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE STORY OF OUR BIBLE

[Signs of the Times, December 10, 1929, The Story of Our Bible, Part 2, pp. 11, 12, 14]

In last week's article we referred briefly to the translation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament into what is usually designated as the Septuagint version, and I will now make some observations concerning the value of this Greek version. While the work was by no means perfect, and a variety of technical errors have been pointed out by critical scholars, yet the Septuagint is of considerable value to the textual critic and to the student of the Scriptures who seeks to ascertain the fullest and most correct meaning of the living oracles. It "gives evidence of the character and condition of the Hebrew MSS. from which it was made, with respect to vowel points and the mode of writing. This evidence often renders very material help in the correction and establishment of the Hebrew text. Being made from MSS. far older than the Masoretic recension, a revision made between the fifth and the eighth centuries, which established the chief text of the Old Testament, the Septuagint often indicates readings more ancient and more correct than those of our present Hebrew MSS. and editions; and often speaks decisively between the conflicting readings of the present MSS." *SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.1*

SEPTUAGINT IN CHRIST'S TIME

We must not forget that the Holy Scriptures in the time of our Lord consisted of those books which we now find in the Old Testament, and that the version in common use at that time was this Greek translation. When, therefore, the writers of the New Testament

wished to make use of a passage from their scriptures, it was only natural that they should take it from the Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew, as Biblical Hebrew was not understood by the common people. Furthermore, this Greek translation had a marked influence upon the language of Christian writers and teachers as they sought to show that the types, shadows, and prophecies of the olden time found their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. The high priest and the sacrifices of the ancient tabernacle were a prophecy of Him who “gave Himself for our sins,” and who “ever liveth to make intercession for” us, and the same words were used in the New Testament, although with a significance hitherto unknown.*SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.2*

During the second century A. D. there appeared Greek translations of the Old Testament by Aquila (whose purpose seemed to be to oppose the authority of the Septuagint), by Symmachus, and by Theodotion, so that “before the end of the second century there were, besides the Septuagint, three versions of the Old Testament in Greek, known to both Jews and Christians. All this could not fail in making the Old Testament Scriptures better known and more widely read.”*SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.3*

Various translations based upon the Septuagint appeared during the first four or five centuries, among which are the Old Latin, the Memphitic (or Coptic), the Thebaic (or Sahidic), the Ethiopic, the Gothic, and the Armenian. These translations have proved useful in bringing the Old Testament to different people in their own language or dialect, but the Greek translation has remained as the classic.*SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.4*

After the invention of printing toward the end of the fifteenth century, editions of the Bible in various languages began to be published. The first printed edition of the Septuagint appeared in 1518. The publication of the Complutensian Polyglot took place in 1552. The Roman, or Vatican, edition, based upon the ancient and valuable manuscript in the Vatican Library, was issued in 1587, and became in a general way the Textus Receptus of the Septuagint. “The researches of scholars for the last two centuries and a half have confirmed the verdict of the Roman editors in favor of the Vatican MSS. The text as published appears to present the actual

Septuagint version such as it stood before the labors of Origen, with at least but few attempts at correction or revision.”*SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.5*

While the facts concerning the translation of the Old Testament into various languages are of interest and importance in establishing the history of the Bible, yet the average American reader may be more anxious to know about the vernacular translations now available. In later articles I shall deal with the leading translations and revisions that have been made since the invention of printing, and so will confine myself now to the consideration of some of the English translations of the Old Testament now in print. Within the last two or three years two English translations of the Old Testament have appeared and been rather widely advertised—one made by James Moffatt, an English scholar, and the other by several professors of the Chicago University. Those who wish to be informed as to the freedom with which Biblical scholars of the Modern School handle the original Hebrew text, amending and transposing it to make it conform to their own ideas of what the writers ought to have written, can secure this information by comparing these translations with the latest results of conservative scholarship. Those who prefer to regard as authoritative the text that is the result of the most conscientious textual criticism, will probably not consider it necessary to provide themselves with these modernistic translations.*SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.6*

THE WORD “JEHOVAH”

The two translations that are now commanding the interest and attention of Bible students in this country are the Authorized Version of 1611 with its later revisions, and the American Revised Version of 1901. Without entering at present into the history of these two translations, I shall now call attention to some of the differences between them, hoping that I may thus be able to help the average reader to an intelligent choice between them. This comparison will be confined to the Old Testament, as I am now considering that portion of the Bible, and I will first direct attention to some general differences. Two of the Hebrew words that are employed as names of Deity are represented by the same English word, “Lord,” in the Authorized Version, being distinguished by the use of small letters

in the one case and of small capitals in the other. In the American Revised Version one word is translated “Lord” and the other “Jehovah,” and thus the difference is clearly marked. This difference is not one that affects any doctrinal teaching, and it might be easily passed over as nonessential. However, it may be helpful to consider briefly the real significance of these two words in Hebrew. *SITI December 10, 1929, page 10.7*

I am indebted to the English scholar, R. L. Ottley, for the following quotation: “The name Adonai implies that man’s relationship to God is one of loving trust rather than of fear.... Jehovah is absolutely self-subsistent and independent. With Him is the fountain of life; He *has life in Himself*. Further, the name points to the future. Jehovah is one whose intercourse with the human race is continuous, living, and progressive.... The appellations which the heathen gave to their deities, Baal, Milcom, and the like, point to little more than a relationship of abject dependence. The title Jehovah, on the contrary, implies that God’s dealings with His people are not those of mere arbitrary sovereignty, but those of covenanted love.” This interpretation of the name “Jehovah” is clearly warranted by the words of God to Moses in *Exodus 6:2-8*, from which it is clear that “Jehovah” is the covenant name, the redeeming name. As this title is used between six thousand and seven thousand times in the Old Testament, we may safely conclude that the great revelation is of God as the Redeemer. This revelation is brought to a climax in the New Testament, from which we learn that Jehovah of the Old Testament was manifested in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, “the Saviour of the world.” This wondrous truth is indicated by the general tenor of the revelation, and by the direct application to Jesus of texts from the Old Testament that are there applied to Jehovah, but also by the etymological signification of the name “Jesus.” The Greek word for “Jesus” is the transliteration of the Hebrew word for “Joshua,” as will be seen by comparing the text and the margin of *Acts 7:45* and *Hebrews 4:8*. But “Joshua” is a contraction for “Jehoshua,” which is compounded of “Jah” (the short form of “Jehovah”) and “Hosea,” salvation, so that “Jehoshua,” “Joshua,” “Jesus,” means Jehovah as salvation. Thus “Jehovah-Jesus” is as it were the message of the whole Bible compressed into a pervading personality. This suggests the importance of preserving the name “Jehovah” in the English text. *SITI December*

IMMODEST PHRASES CHANGED

Again, some forms of expression that may have passed without serious objection in the early part of the seventeenth century are decidedly objectionable now as being offensive to our sense of modesty. A translation has been employed in the American Revised Version which eliminates all immodest language without changing the real meaning. *SITI December 10, 1929, page 11.1*

Again, the meaning of some English words has been changed by usage during the last three hundred years, so that as they now appear in the Authorized Version they are likely to be misleading. One example is the word “peculiar” found in *Deuteronomy 14:2* and other places. This change of meaning is recognized in the American Revised Version by a change in the translation. *SITI December 10, 1929, page 11.2*

Again, “the subdivision of the books of Sacred Scripture into chapters and verses, without regard to the sense, and frequently to its great injury, has thrown a most serious obstacle in the way of common readers.” This is remedied in the American Revised Version by paragraphing the text according to the sense, which sometimes leads to ignoring even chapter divisions, although the numbering of chapters and verses is retained. This is simply a return to the system which prevailed “before the Genevan New Testament of 1557 unfortunately broke up the text into divisions at once so minute and so arbitrary as the verses invented by Robert Stephen.” *SITI December 10, 1929, page 11.3*

I regret that my limited space will prevent me from considering all of the many differences in the translation of the same original texts, and I shall be compelled to confine myself to some of the more striking ones. The substitution in *Genesis 3:15* of “He shall bruise thy head” is worthy of special notice. In *Isaiah 43:10-13* we find the meaning of the expression “I am He” fully developed and emphasized. Note especially the significant statements, “I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides Me there is no savior.... Yea, since the day was I am He.” Connect with them the remarkable words of

Jesus: "Except ye believe that I am He ye shall die in your sins." *John 8:24*. The "He" of *Genesis 3:15* is Jehovah, the only Saviour of *Isaiah 43:11*, who was manifested in Jesus of Nazareth who demanded faith in Himself, the Jehovah- (*Continued on page 14*) (*Continued from page 12*) Saviour, as the one and only condition of salvation from sin. This direct connection between Jesus and the promised seed of *Genesis 3:15* is obscured by introducing the word "it" in the Authorized Version. *SITI December 10, 1929, page 12.1*

"Cherubim" and "seraphim" are the Hebrew plurals of "cherub" and "seraph," but in the Authorized Version the English plural sign is added to these forms, and we have "cherubims" and "seraphims." See *Genesis 3:24* and *Isaiah 6:2, 6*, and many other passages. *SITI December 10, 1929, page 14.1*

The rendering, "Darius the Median took the kingdom" (*Daniel 5:31*), has given rise to much unfavorable criticism, inasmuch as Cyrus was the conqueror of Babylon; but there is no occasion for such criticism when it is rendered, as in the American Revised Version, "Darius the Mede received the kingdom." Darius was evidently a vassal king who was indebted to Cyrus for his kingdom. *SITI December 10, 1929, page 14.2*

These few examples will serve as illustrations of the benefit that will accrue to the reader of the American Revised Version. At the same time I wish to reiterate what I have already stated, that these differences do not affect any Christian doctrine, and those who prefer to use the Authorized Version will find in it the blessed truths that will make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." *SITI December 10, 1929, page 14.3*

December 17, 1929

The Carefulness of Bible Revisers

WWP

W. W. Prescott

In this article William W. Prescott tells some of the methods and with what great care the various revisions of the Scriptures have been made. It is also interesting to note that all revisions have been opposed by a few ultraconservatives.

[Signs of the Times, December 17, 1929, The Story of Our Bible, Part 3, pp. 6, 7, 9]

In Reviewing the history of the reception accorded to the various editions of the Bible since the days of the apostles, I have noted some experiences that clearly indicate the attitude of conservative scholars toward any change in the particular translation to which they had become accustomed. This disinclination to discard the old for a new rendering is not at all surprising, and has doubtless served as a safeguard against too radical changes in the various revisions that have been made. *SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.1*

CONSENSUS OF OPINION DEMANDED

One of the rules adopted by the committee of the revision that resulted in giving us the Authorized Version, and also of the committee that has more recently revised that revision, was that no change should be made in the text unless authorized by a two-thirds vote, and that no reading should be noted in the margin unless authorized by a majority vote. It would, of course, follow that a rendering that was approved by even 60 per cent of the revisers would fail to be adopted, and such a rule might be condemned by many who could not be counted as radical critics, but with such a rule enforced there arises in consequence a probability amounting almost to certainty that the changes actually made would be fully warranted by the carefully sifted evidence. It by no means follows that the same degree of certainty attaches to translations or

revisions made by individuals or small groups on their own responsibility. Such work must be vindicated by its inherent merit in each particular case.*SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.2*

THE SCHOLARLY JEROME

Perhaps the earliest instance of a scholarly revision was that of the Old Latin by Jerome, which was made at the close of the fourth century. His translation of the Old Testament and his revision of the New Testament “encountered much opposition, which greatly irritated his temper and betrayed him into contemptuous abuse of his opponents, whom he styled ‘*bipedes asellos*’ [little asses with two feet]. But by inherent virtues, rather than by external authority, it passed into such current use that in the eighth century it was the Vulgate, the common version, in the Western churches.”—*Schaff*. This case of emphatic, and perhaps unreasonable, criticism of a scholar’s faithful work in seeking to provide a better edition of the Bible is not an isolated one. The history of revisions from the time of Tyndale down to our day furnishes further illustrations of the same attitude, two of which I shall now mention.*SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.3*

OPPOSITION TO KING JAMES VERSION

When the Authorized, or King James, Version appeared in 1611, Hugh Broughton, an outstanding scholar of his time, who was not made a member of the committee on revision because of his peculiar temperament, was greatly stirred. He gave vent to his feelings in a letter to “a right worshipful knight, attendant upon the king,” James I, from which the following extract is taken: “The late Bible was sent me to censure, which bred in me a sadness that will grieve me while I breathe. It is so ill done. Tell His Majesty that I had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses than any such translation by my consent should be urged upon poor churches.”*SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.4*

Such was the decided preference of the common people for the earlier translations to which they had become accustomed that it required a full half century before the new translation, the

Authorized Version, supplanted them; but in spite of Broughton's very severe criticism and his willingness to sacrifice himself to prevent the circulation of this latest product of English scholarship, the good judgment of English-speaking Christendom in due time prevailed. For more than two centuries the Authorized Version was the standard Bible for English readers in all parts of the world.*SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.5*

In view of the facts that I have just recited it will not unduly startle my readers to be told that the English Revised Version, issued in 1881 and 1884, was subjected to strong criticism. Perhaps the most bitter opposer was John W. Burgon, Dean of Chichester, who made what has been designated as "his savage attack" upon it. He was ably assisted by Mr. E. Miller, who survived him and continued his work. These two scholars presented to the public the results of their critical studies in several books dealing with the different phases of the main question, and made the most determined effort to discredit the work of the revisers. In view of the importance of the issue at stake, and of the scholarly way in which these men prosecuted their work by collating and examining a large number of manuscripts, it seems advisable to notice here the estimate placed upon the foundation and the method of their criticism by later textual critics. I will submit an extract from a book by a recognized English scholar:*SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.6*

"The propositions upon which Burgon and Miller based their defense of the traditional text, reduced to their simplest form, are two in number: (1) that the universal acceptance of it by the church from the fourth century to the nineteenth is in itself proof of its superiority, since the church must have been divinely guided in its dealings with the sacred word of God; (2) that, apart from such considerations, it can be shown to be both older and intrinsically better than its rival, which they call the 'neologian' text...*SITI December 17, 1929, page 6.7*

NO UNIFORMITY PRESERVED

"The selection of the traditional type of text by the church was gradual and informal, and therefore cannot claim the sanction of a deliberate decree. Nor is the argument that God would certainly

secure the preservation of the true form of His word much more pertinent. We may indeed believe that He would not allow His word to be seriously corrupted, or any part of it essential to man's salvation to be lost or obscured; but the difference between the rival types of text is not one of doctrine. No fundamental point of doctrine rests upon a disputed reading: and the truths of Christianity are as certainly expressed in the text of Westcott and Hort as in that of Stephanus (the basic text of the Authorized Version). It is, moreover, a perversion of the facts of history to speak of the text of the Scriptures as preserved in a uniform shape from the fourth century to the present day, as the argument of Burgon requires. While the substance of the sacred text, and its general type, have been so preserved, a very great amount of variation in detail has been admitted. The manuscripts of the Greek Testament differ considerably from one another. The manuscripts of the Vulgate [the Latin translation] differ from those of the Greek Testament, and have suffered even more corruption among themselves. We have seen in an earlier chapter how the history of the Vulgate text is one of widespread depravation and of repeated attempts at restoration. The Syriac and Coptic texts, again, differ in many particulars from both Greek and Latin. Still more great and deep-seated is the difference in the text of the Old Testament. The text of the Septuagint, which was and is the Bible of the Greek-speaking churches, differs widely from the Masoretic Hebrew. In short, the first of Burgon's main propositions is neither convincing *a priori* nor in fact reconcilable with history. History makes it clear that God in His wisdom has permitted great deviations in the tradition of the sacred text through the frailty of its human trustees, though always so that its substance was not lost or seriously endangered. *SITI*
December 17, 1929, page 6.8

EARLY MANUSCRIPTS MORE RELIABLE

"Dismissing, then, the *a priori* argument that the church would certainly be divinely guided in her choice of a text, we are forced to deal with the problem in accordance with the established principles of textual science. Here, too, Burgon and Miller claim a verdict, and that principally on the ground of the enormous numerical preponderance of witnesses in their favor. Again and again they contrast the hundreds of manuscripts found upon the one side with

the mere handful which is opposed to them, and to which modern editors have almost unanimously pinned their faith. 'Is it likely,' says Burgon, 'is it in any way credible, that we can be warranted in rejecting the testimony of (suppose) 1490 ancient witnesses, in favor of the testimony borne by (suppose) ten?' 'What' asks Mr. Miller, 'would an editor of Sophocles do under such circumstances?' The answer to this query is simple. He would do precisely as Hort and the majority of editors have done. There are about 104 MSS. of Sophocles; yet the evidence of a very large majority of these is wholly disregarded by all editors. One manuscript (L, in the Laurentian library at Florence) is of predominant authority; two others are of considerable value; the rest have little independent worth but only support one or other of the leaders, or diverge into palpable error. ... So, in fact, with every other classical author; in every case where any considerable number of MSS. exists, it is found that nearly everything depends upon a few leading authorities, all the rest being relegated to the background and consulted only under special circumstances. *SITI December 17, 1929, page 7.1*

"When, therefore, Burgon and Miller condemn the modern editors of the New Testament, from Lachman [1831] to Hort, for their preference of a few generally early MSS. and versions to the great mass of later authorities, they are in fact impugning the universally accepted principles of textual criticism. The earliest printed texts of the classical authors were in nearly all cases based upon comparatively late manuscripts, because these were the most numerous and accessible at the time; but scientific criticism has uniformly shown that the texts so obtained were unsound, and that recourse must be had to a select group of a few authorities, generally those of earliest date. In some instances a single manuscript is held to outweigh all its rivals, except where it is manifestly corrupt." - *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, K. C. B., F. B. A., second edition, pp. 316-320. *SITI December 17, 1929, page 7.2*

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